

THE DOCTRINE
CONCERNING
ELECTION

PRESENTED IN
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

From the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church.

WITH A PREFACE AND CONCLUSION

BY

C. F. W. WALTHER.

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The Rev. Dr. Ronald R. Feuerhahn

PREFACE.

A short time ago there appeared in the "Lutheran Concordia Publishing House" at St. Louis, a tract bearing the title: "*The Controversy concerning Predestination.*" At the conclusion of this tract the author promised his readers, by the assistance of God, immediately to publish another in which he would present the pure Lutheran doctrine concerning predestination in the most simple manner. Pursuant to that promise this pamphlet is published.

Whether this tract has been gotten up in a manner desired and expected by our readers, remains, indeed, to be seen.

Probably many would have preferred it, in the first place, if we would have presented the doctrine of election in a short and concise manner in our own words. But we thought it preferable to take the answers on the questions put, literally from our church confession, from the *Formula of Concord*. And this for the following reasons: 1. because we could not at any rate have answered the questions better; 2. because the Lutheran reader will just in this way the sooner be convinced that the doctrine presented in this little book is not a new, but the old pure doctrine of our orthodox Lutheran church on predestination; 3. because in this way every one can see, who wants to see, that at this time just the only real Lutheran doctrine on predestination is rejected and condemned as godless Calvinistic heresy, and that, too, by men who desire to be regarded as particularly true Lutherans; 4. because, in this way, it will be prevented by the grace of God, that a controversy should arise on account of this book even among Lutherans who are true to the confessions; 5. and, finally, because our confession itself says that it has incorporated the unanimous doctrine of our church on predestina-

tion, for the very purpose "only, in order to prevent disunion and discussion among our *posterity*." It is now 44 years ago, when in Germany, at our ordination, we already took a solemn oath on the Symbolical Books of our church, and there publicly promised our church, in whose service we entered, that, at the risk of our salvation, we would be a faithful guardian over these precious treasures; hence we would be a cursed and perjured man, if we would now while the doctrine of our confession is loudly denounced as Calvinism, be ashamed of our sworn confession, and not much rather bear all the disgrace at present cast upon us, than to deny it, and, now in our old days when we have arrived at the portals of eternity, apostatize from it. No, we would rather, on account of our firmly holding fast to our confession, depart from this world cursed as a heretic and condemned by men, and be accepted of God through His grace as His faithful stêward, than to be praised by men on account of our unsteadfastness, and, thus praised, to depart as an unjust steward, and hear the terrible voice of God: "I never knew you; depart from me, thou worker of iniquity." We know very well that not all who at present condemn us and call us heretics, are no longer Christians; but, God be praised, we are not the first person who, for the *sake of the truth*, has been called a heretic and condemned, even by Christians, out of ignorance. As *Jerome of Prague* on the 30th of May 1416 arrived at the stake, where he was to be burned on account of the truth, a peasant stepped up with a large bundle of twigs, in order to do his part that the supposed heretic might be put out of the world. But *Jerome of Prague*, the faithful witness to the truth, by no means rebuked the peasant, but exclaimed smilingly: "*O! holy simplicity!* he that deceives you, is guilty of a thousandfold sin." The holy martyr, however, did not on that account begin to doubt his doctrine, when he saw that even Christians, deceived by others, assisted in his condemnation from ignorance. Thus we will neither scold our deceived Christian opponents, nor on their account become doubtful concerning the truth; but remain with the confession of he truth, let come upon us what may on this account. For to remain with the confession when we reap praise and honor by

it, is no great task; but when a person is declared as unfaithful, yea, blasphemed as having apostatized from the confession, just because he remains true to the confession: then is the time to stand the test and by deed to prove one's faithful adherence to the confession. Although they may again cry like the papists: "The fathers! The fathers!"—a faithful Lutheran answers: "*God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure shall to eternity endure!*" But perhaps some may think, as in this pamphlet the object is to repeat the doctrine of our *confession* that is of our *Formula of Concord*, it would, indeed, have been sufficient if we would only have simply had reprinted the eleventh article of the *Formula of Concord*. But we hope that the attentive reader will soon observe that our questions will do him good service. He will observe that by a mere hurried reading of the *Formula of Concord* often just such points which are of the greatest importance, are too easily passed over unnoticed, to which his attention is now directed by the questions presented. For this purpose former great theologians have already in like manner presented the entire *Formula of Concord* in the form of questions and answers. We can testify on our conscience, that by our questions we have in no case intended to substitute foreign thoughts into our confession, but have only intended, by our questions, to clearly present the real doctrine contained therein.

From a certain source the report has been spread that we formerly held a different doctrine on predestination from the one we hold at present; yet this is a gross falsehood, as we could clearly prove from the manuscripts of our sermons written in the earliest days of our ministry in America, if it were necessary. But it would not pay the trouble to do this; for it does not matter in the least, whether we formerly taught this or that on predestination, as far as the question, what is the true doctrine, is concerned. Luther also taught differently in the year 1517 when he publicly posted up his 95 propositions from what he did ten years before when he was consecrated a priest; but his 95 propositions were not false on that account. He that brings up and employs such proofs in order to overthrow his opponent, only shows that he is forced to do this from the absence of real

substantial arguments. But, as already said, as we teach to day, so we always taught since God, in His marvellous ways, has brought us to the living knowledge that God by the Lutheran Church-Reformation has really again restored to Christianity the Christian doctrine in its Apostolic purity.

Perhaps, also, many readers have hoped that the second tract promised would so present the doctrine of predestination, as to clear out of the way every thing at which their reason, or the reason of others, has been offended. This, of course, is not the case. But why not?—Because such a representation is not at all possible, if we would not pervert the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures and our confession. The holy Apostle Paul, as every diligent reader of the Bible knows, has presented the doctrine on predestination most extensively, in the 8. 9. 10. and 11. chapters of his epistle to the Romans, and what does he write at the conclusion of his argument?—He exclaims: “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen.*” Rom. 11, 33—36. From this you can see, dear reader, that when these concluding words of Paul do not apply to a representation of the doctrine of predestination, if the doctrine as presented does not move the reader also to exclaim: “*O how unsearchable! O how past finding out!*”; if the presentation much rather nicely agrees with reason, —then, on the contrary, it certainly does not agree with the Holy Scriptures and with the Scriptural confessions of the orthodox church; then it certainly contains a false doctrine, mixed with human opinions. Do not become offended, dear Lutheran reader, because we have made no attempt in this pamphlet to present the doctrine on predestination in such a way that it may nicely agree with reason; but consider: this doctrine contains mysteries which no human understanding can fathom in this life. Hence, as in every article of faith, so also in this doctrine you, as a faithful Lutheran Christian, must always only ask:

“*What is written?*” and then yield your reason captive unto the obedience of Christ, of His Word and of faith. (2 Cor. 10, 5.) But you must also, if you have become certain what the clear doctrine of God’s Word on predestination is, guard against drawing all kinds of conclusions from it; no, then, on the contrary, put your hand upon your mouth and desire to *know* nothing whatever about it, but what God has revealed in His Word. You should dread the question by which Satan once misled our mother Eve: *Yea, hath God said [this]?*” (Gen. 3, 1.) Nor should you ask with Nicodemus: “*How can these things be?*” (John 3, 9.) For if you do this, you have already departed from God’s Word. But rather speak humbly to God with Samuel: “*Speak; for Thy servant heareth.*” (1 Sam. 3, 10.) If you find that in the Holy Scriptures two doctrines are clearly and plainly revealed, which appear to contradict each other, you must not endeavor to reconcile them with your reason, much less must you accept the one and reject the other; but you must then believe both heartily, and wait until the next world, where God will then reveal to you how both doctrines most gloriously harmonize. Many have already thought and said: “In the Bible it is written that there is only *one* God, and yet, at the same time, it is written, that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; but this can, indeed, not be reconciled!” Hence some following their reason, have drawn the conclusion: Hence, the Father only can be true God; others, on the contrary, following their reason in like manner, have accepted three gods; and thus both have shamefully trifled away, and lost the true God and, consequently, their salvation. O beware! then, dear reader, of such desire to reconcile! Even now many desire to explain and make the unsearchable and inexplicable mysteries which the doctrine on predestination contains, agree with reason, by saying: Why the elect are predestinated, may be *explained* from this that God *foresaw* their conduct, that they, namely, would accept the Gospel in faith, and remain steadfast in every cross and temptation, and endure in the true faith to their end. True, many now say in order to justify this subtle reasoning, that many pure teachers of our church have also taught that the elect are predestinated in

view of their foreseen faith; but if our present opponents only taught this, they would then not decry our doctrine as heresy, and much less would we accuse them of heresy, although we, indeed, regard that method of teaching by which it is taught that God has elected in view of foreseen faith, as subject to misunderstanding, which can not only easily be misused in favor of false doctrine, but also has really been thus misused, and is still misused. For this reason the Formula of Concord also expressly warns against drawing conclusions from the foreknowledge of God. [720, 3.]

Hence beware, beware, dear reader, from reconciling articles of faith with your reason!—Leave to God His mysteries unsearched, and do not wonder that God knows more than you, and that He does not permit us poor short-sighted mortals, yea, not even angels and archangels to look into His secret counsels, until the day of the revelation of His glory. *Luther* says in his House-Postil: “The Bible and Scripture is not such a book which flows out of reason and human wisdom. Therefore, whoever undertakes to measure and compass the Scripture, how it agrees with reason, abandons it entirely. For all heretics, from the beginning, have arisen on this account, because they thought that what they read in the Scriptures, they might so interpret according to the teachings of reason. . . . *St. Augustine* complains that, at first, he entered the Scripture with his reason and studied it for nine entire years, and desired to grasp the Scripture with his reason; but the more he studied it, the less he understood it, until he had finally experienced by his loss, *that a man must put out the eyes of reason*, and say: What the Scriptures say, that I leave unsearched by reason; but believe it with an honest heart. If a man will do this, then the Scriptures will become clear and plain, which were dark before. Thus *St. Gregory* also says: The Holy Scriptures are a stream in which an elephant may swim and drown; but a lamb goes through it, as through a shallow brook.” (Walch XIII, 1149. 1162.) At another place *Luther* writes: “If reconciling were permitted, we could not retain a single article of faith.” (Walch XII, 1929.)

Further, think also of this, dear reader: This present pam-

phlet has not been written for this purpose that it be read once hurriedly and then laid aside. You would have but little benefit from this. But read it again and again, and *study* it with prayer and supplications unto God for the light of His Holy Spirit. For as the entire pamphlet is taken from our confession, you have in it an exceedingly rich treasure of doctrine, which our dear Lutheran Church has transmitted to us as a precious booty for our faithful preservation, captured in long and terrible struggles.

Should this pamphlet fall into the hands of such a reader also who is not yet a living and believing Christian,—we advise him either not to read it at all, or, at least, not before he also has become a living and believing Christian. For before this is done, what this pamphlet contains is not food for him. The question for him is rather: "*What shall I do to be saved?*" And the one thing needful *for him* is, that he first be brought on the way of true repentance to God and thus come to faith in Jesus Christ. For where the light of a living faith does not yet shine in the heart, nothing else can be expected, but that you will become offended at the doctrine of predestination, just then when it is presented not according to human reason, but according to the Word of God. Wherefore *Luther* writes in his golden preface to the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans: "Follow this epistle *in its order*: concern yourself *first* with Christ and the Gospel, that you may know your sins and *His* grace, then contend against sin, as here the 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. chapters have taught. Afterwards, if you" (that is, *in your experience*) "come to the eighth chapter, under the cross and suffering, it will rightly teach you predestination in the 9., 10. and 11. chapters, how comfortable it is. For without suffering the cross and the agonies of death, one cannot treat predestination without danger and secret anger against God. Hence, Adam must indeed first be dead, before he can bear this and drink the strong wine. So beware, that you do not drink wine while you are still a babe. Every doctrine has its measure, time and age." (S. Walch XIV, 125 f.)—Let no one, therefore, buy and read this pamphlet in order to please us. Nor shall we send it or permit it to be sent to any one who does

not want it, or of whom we do not know that he desires to have it. For if we send our writings to those who do not want them, this is nothing else but sneaking officiousness; but if one attempt to smuggle his writings into the congregations of others, in order to awaken strife and discord among them, and to sow the seeds of mistrust and suspicion, and, especially, to strengthen those who delight in creating a quarrel in their congregation, or those in Church discipline or already justly excommunicated: then this is so much the more shameful and a certain proof that such writers seek to peddle false wares, namely, false doctrine. Listen to what our dear *Luther* says about this. In his explanation of the 82. Psalm, after warning against the *sneaking busybodies* who meddle in the office of others, he himself makes the following objection: "Here you will say to me, perhaps, why do you then teach with your *books* in the whole world, as you are only preacher here in Wittenberg?" And he answers: "I am a called minister, and had a right to teach *my flock* in writings. And if others *desired my writings and asked me for them*, it was my duty to do this, *for thereby I have at no time imposed myself upon them, nor desired or requested any one to read them*; just as other pious ministers and preachers write books, and do not prevent or *compel* any one to read them, and thereby, also, teach and run through the whole world, *and yet do not sneak like the wicked un-called men into the offices of others without the knowledge and will of the ministers.*" (Walch V, 1062. 1063.)—

Before we close this preface, we yet remark the following: At the close of each answer are figures in brackets. The first figure shows the page and the second the paragraph in the Book of Concord, New Market Edition (count paragraphs from top of page). With the assistance of these figures every reader can quickly and easily convince himself that all the answers are not our words, but are taken word for word from our Formula of Concord.

God has imposed upon our American Lutheran Church the difficult task, by the controversy which has broken out on predestination, to contend for one of the most mysterious doctrines of His Word, to judge which no human reasoners, no idle,

curious, vain glorious spirits, no indifferent false Christians, but only true, enlightened, humble Christians, being concerned about their salvation, who tremble before God's Word, are sufficient and capable. In this controversy on predestination the great and highly important questions are considered: "Whom have those who come to faith, remain in faith, and are saved, to thank for this? Have they to thank themselves for this? Or have they at least in part to thank themselves? Or have they to thank for this wholly and alone God's mercy and Christ's most holy merits? Does the honor of our salvation belong entirely to God alone? Or is there a cause for this in man also? Has man by nature powers to cooperate any thing in the work of his salvation, to determine himself for salvation, at least, to give assent, though ever so weak? Or is every man by nature spiritually dead, and must God, therefore, do all by His grace?"—Yes, about these great truths, about the doctrine of salvation alone by grace, alone on Christ's account, alone through the faith given of God, the present controversy turns, not about theological quibbles, but about the most important points of practical Christianity. May God have mercy on our American Lutheran Zion, and help that no upright soul may err in this contest for the truth, but that all true children of God within our Church may finally, as concerns this doctrine also, gather under the old good banner of our confession, and thus be a light to many in this hour of midnight, in our last distressful times.

May God do this for Jesus Christ's sake, the common Saviour of all sinners and the eternal King of truth. Amen.

C. F. W. W.

THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

IN

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

1. In short, what is predestination?

The ordaining of God unto salvation. [711, 3.]

2. What is the difference which, in the first place, ought to be accurately observed in the doctrine of predestination?

In the first place, the difference between *foreknowledge* (*praescientia*) and eternal *election* (*praedestinatio*) of God ought to be accurately observed. [583, 1. 711, 2.]

3. What is the *foreknowledge* of God (*praescientia*)?

The *foreknowledge* of God is, that God sees and knows all things before they come to pass. [711, 2. 583, 2.]

4. Does the *foreknowledge* (*praescientia vel praevisio*) of God extend to all creatures?

Yes: the *foreknowledge* of God extends to all creatures, *the good and the bad*: namely, He sees and knows all things before,—that which now is or will be, that which now occurs or will occur, whether it be good or bad, since before God all things, whether they be past or future, are manifest and present. For thus it is written: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father," Matth. 10, 29. And Psalm 139, 16.: "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Again, Is. 37, 28.: "I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me." [711, 1. See also 583, 3.]

5. Does the eternal *election* of God, as well as the *foreknowledge*, extend to all men, the good and the bad?

No: the eternal *election* or predestination of God, that is, the ordaining of God unto salvation, *does not pertain both to the good and to the bad, but only to the children of God.* [711, 2.]

6. To what particular children of God does the eternal election of God extend?

Only to the children of God, *who were elected and ordained to eternal life, before the foundation of the world.* [711, 3.]

7. By what do you prove from the Holy Scriptures, that the eternal election is not universal, but extends only to the children of God, ordained to eternal life?

By this, that Paul declares, Eph. 1, 4. 5. : “He hath chosen *us* in Christ Jesus, and *predestinated us unto the adoption of children.*” [711, 3.]

8. Does God’s foreknowledge (*praescientia*) not only foresee evils, but is it also a *cause* of the evil?

The foreknowledge (*praescientia*) of God *foresees* evils also, and *knows* them before they happen, but this is not to be understood as if it were God’s gracious *will* that they *should* occur. But that which the perverse and evil will of the *devil* and of *men* propose and desire to do, God foresees and foreknows. And this foreknowledge, even in evil things and deeds, continues to act in its *proper mode*, so that God prescribes certain *limits* to these evils, which He neither *desires* nor approves; and *definite bounds* are assigned, which they cannot transgress, and limits are imposed declaring how long they may endure, and the time and the mode according to which they shall again be *arrested* and be subjected to *punishment*. And God *so regulates* all these things, that they contribute to the *glory of His divine name*, and to the *salvation of His elect*, while the wicked are confounded and put to shame. [711, 3.]

9. Is, then, God’s foreknowledge (*praescientia*) also the cause of evil, which it foresees and foreknows?

No: the foreknowledge of God is not the *origin* or the *cause* of evil (for God does not *create* or *cause* evil, nor does he *facilitate* or *promote* it); but the wicked, perverted will of the devil and of men is the cause of evil. For thus it is written: “O Israel, *thou hast destroyed thyself*; but in *me* is thine *help*.” Hos. 13, 9. Again, Psalm 5, 4. : “Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.” [711, 4.]

10. Does the election of God only foresee and foreknow the salvation of the elect, or is it also a cause of their salvation and of everything that belongs to the obtaining of the same?

The eternal election of God not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but through his gracious will and good pleasure in Christ Jesus, IS ALSO THE CAUSE WHICH PROCURES, WORKS, FACILITATES, AND PROMOTES OUR SALVATION AND WHAT-EVER PERTAINS TO IT. [712, 2.]

11. Is it so important that the eternal election of God is a cause of our salvation, and that it procures, works, facilitates, and promotes whatever pertains to it?

Yes indeed; for upon this our salvation is so firmly grounded that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matth. 16, 18. [712, 2.]

12. By what do you prove that the salvation of the elect is so firmly and immovably grounded upon the eternal election of God?

From this, that it is written: “Neither shall any pluck my sheep out of my hand.” John 10, 28. And again, Acts 13, 48.: “And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” [712, 2.]

13. Is it right to contemplate the eternal election merely in the secret, inscrutable council of God?

No: this eternal election or ordination of God to everlasting life must not be contemplated merely in the secret, inscrutable council of God, as if it comprehended nothing more, or required nothing more, or as if nothing more were to be taken into consideration, than the fact that God foresees what men and how many will secure salvation, and what men and how many shall perish forever,—or as if the Lord would institute a certain military review, saying, this one shall be saved, but that one shall be lost; this one shall persevere to the end, but that one shall not persevere. [712, 3.]

14. Why should we not contemplate election thus, as though it comprehended nothing more than that God foresaw what men and how many would secure salvation, what men and how many would perish forever?

For, from this opinion, many derive and adopt strange, perilous, and pernicious thoughts, which produce and confirm

either *security* and *impenitence*, or *discouragement* and *despair*; so that they indulge in hazardous reflections, saying: "Since God has predestined his elect to salvation, before the foundation of the world, Eph. 1, 4, 5., and God's election cannot fail, or be obstructed or changed by any one, Js. 14, 27.; Rom. 9, 19., *if* therefore, *I am elected to salvation*, it cannot be impaired, even if I commit every manner of sin and shame without repentance, even if I do not regard the Word and Sacraments, nor concern myself about repentance, faith, prayer, or piety;—for I shall and must nevertheless be saved, because the election of God must stand; but *if I am not predestined*, it will avail nothing even if I do adhere to the Word, repent, believe, &c., for I can neither hinder nor change the predestination of God." [712, 4.]

15. Do such thoughts arise in the minds even of true Christians when they contemplate the eternal election according to their reason?

Yes: such thoughts may arise in the minds even of the pious—although through the grace of God they repent, believe, and have a desire to live piously—when they thus address themselves: "If you are not elected to salvation in eternity, it is all still in vain." And especially do these thoughts present themselves, when the individual takes into consideration his own weakness, and views the examples of those who persevered not, but afterwards fell away. [712, 5. 584. 5.]

16. What is a firm and sure position which cannot deceive our expectation, and which should be taken in opposition to this false opinion and perilous thoughts concerning election?

It is this: It is certain, "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God," not to contribute to a feeling of security, and to impenitence, but to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for *correction*, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Tim. 3, 16. It is also certain, that all things in the Word of God are prescribed unto us, not to drive us into despair, but "that we, through patience and *comfort* of the Scriptures, might have *hope*," Rom. 15, 4. Therefore, it is without any doubt, that *that* in no way

is the sound sense, or the legitimate use of the doctrine concerning the eternal predestination of God, by which either impenitence or despair is excited or confirmed. [713, 1.]

17. How does the *Holy Scriptures* also set forth this doctrine?

Nor is this doctrine set forth in the Scriptures in any other manner, than *to direct us to the Word of God*, Eph. 1, 13.; 1 Cor. 1, 7. 8.; *to admonish us to repentance*, 2 Tim. 3, 16.; *to encourage us to godliness*, Eph. 1, 4. 13.; John 15, 3.; *to strengthen our faith*, and *to assure us of our salvation*, Eph. 1, 4. 13.; John 10, 28.; 2 Thess. 2, 13. [713, 1.]

18. Dare we regard the doctrine of election as useless or even injurious?

No: the doctrine concerning this article, if it be set forth according to the analogy of the divine Word, neither can nor should be regarded as useless or unnecessary, much less as offensive or injurious, *since the Holy Scriptures mention this article not only at one place casually, but copiously treat and inculcate it in many places.* [710, 1.]

19. But should we not rather remain entirely silent on the doctrine of election, on account of the *abuse* and *misunderstanding* of the same?

Far be it! Nor should the doctrine of the divine Word be neglected or rejected on account of the abuse or errors of others, but much rather should the true sense in reference to this matter be explained according to the authority of the Scriptures, for the purpose of averting all abuses and errors. [710 sq., 1.]

20. To what should we accustom ourselves, if we would reflect and discourse correctly and with advantage upon the eternal election or predestination and ordination of the children of God to everlasting life?

We should accustom ourselves, *not to speculate upon the bare, hidden, secret, inscrutable foreknowledge* of God, but to meditate on it in the manner in which the counsel, the purpose, and ordination of God, in Christ Jesus, who is the right and true book of life, are REVEALED unto us through the Word. Therefore, the whole

doctrine concerning the purpose, the counsel, will, and ordination of God, belonging to our redemption, call, justification, and salvation should be comprised together. For in this manner PAUL treats and explains this article, Rom. 8, 29. 30.; Eph. 1, 4. 5. And the same is also taught by Christ in the parable, Matth. 22, 1—14. [713, 2.]

21. What has God in the first place ordained in His purpose and council, as it is revealed unto us in Christ by the Word?

1. That the human race shall be truly redeemed and reconciled to God through Christ, who by His innocent obedience, suffering and death, has merited for us that righteousness which avails before God, and eternal life. [713, 3. See also 723, 3.]

22. What has God further ordained in His purpose and counsel, as it is revealed unto us in Christ by the Word?

2. That this merit of Christ and His benefits should be offered, administered, and distributed to us, through His Word and Sacraments.

3. That by His Holy Spirit, through the Word, when it is preached, and considered, he will be efficacious and active in us, to turn our hearts unto true repentance, and to preserve us in the true faith.

4. That He will justify all those who in true repentance embrace Christ in genuine faith, graciously receive them, and adopt them as children and heirs of eternal life.

5. That He will sanctify those in love, who are thus justified, as St. Paul, Eph. 1, 4., testifies.

6. That He will defend them in their great weakness, against the devil, the world, and the flesh; will govern and lead them in His ways, and, if they should stumble, raise them up again, and comfort and preserve them in trials and temptations.

7. That He will strengthen and extend in them that good work which He has commenced, and preserve them unto the end, if they adhere to the Word of God, are diligent in prayer, persevere in the grace of God, and faithfully use the gifts received. [713, 4. 5. 6. and 714, 1. 2. 3.]

23. What has God *finally* ordained in His purpose and council, as it is *revealed to us in Christ by the Word?*

8. That He will finally render *those whom He has elected, called, and justified, eternally happy and glorious in everlasting life.* [714, 4.]

24. Has God in this His counsel, purpose and ordination prepared the salvation of His children *in general only?*

No: in this counsel, purpose, and ordination God *has mercifully considered also all and each person of the elect, who will ultimately be saved through Christ, has elected them to salvation, and DECREED, that in the manner now mentioned He will, through His grace, gifts, and operation, BRING THEM TO THIS SALVATION, ASSIST THEM IN IT, PROMOTE IT, AND STENGTHEN AND PRESERVE THEM.* [714, 6.]

25. Does all this really belong to the doctrine of election?

Yes: *all this, according to the Scripture, is comprehended in the doctrine concerning the eternal election of God to the adoption of children, and to everlasting salvation, and should be understood in this article; it ought never to be excluded or omitted, when we discourse of the purpose, predestination, election, and ordination of God to salvation.* [714, 7.]

26. Can the doctrine of election cause security or despair, if it be so presented, that first the general redemption of Christ be laid as the ground, and then the manner be shown how God brings the elect unto salvation?

No: if our views are thus formed in reference to this article, *agreeably to the Scriptures, we can, by the grace of God, properly understand it.* [714, 7.]

27. What belongs to a fuller *explanation and salutary use* of the doctrine of the predestination of God to salvation?

This: *that we should know by what means and whence it can be discerned who the elect are, who can and should embrace this doctrine to their own consolation.* [714, 8.]

28. Why does it belong to a salutary use of this doctrine, that we should know who the elect are?

Because *only the elect will be saved.* [714, 8.]

29. According to what should we *not* judge, if we would know who the elect are?

In reference to this point, we should not judge according to our *reason*, or to the *law*, or to any *external appearance*; nor should we attempt to scrutinize the *concealed, hidden depth of the divine predestination*. [714, 9.]

30. To what should we rather attend, if we would know who the elect are, who can and should embrace this doctrine to their own consolation?

We should attend to the *revealed will of God*. “For He has made known unto us the mystery of His will,” and brought it to light through Christ, that it might be preached, Eph. 1, 9. 10. 11.; 2 Tim. 1, 9. 10. [714, 9.]

31. But how is the mystery of the will of God revealed unto us?

This is revealed unto us thus, as Paul, Rom. 8, 29. 30., declares: “*Whom He did predestinate,*” *elect and ordain*, “them He also CALLED.” [715, 1. 585, 1.]

32. How does God call?

Now God does not call without means, but through the *Word*; hence He has commanded repentance and remission of sins to be *preached*. And Paul also testifies the same thing, where he writes: “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though *God did beseech you by us*—be ye reconciled to God.” 2 Cor. 5, 20. And the guests, whom the king desired to have at the marriage of his son, he caused to be *called* by his servants whom he sent forth, Matth. 22, 3. 4. And the householder called into his vineyard, some at the first hour, others at the second, third, sixth, ninth, and even the eleventh hour, Matth. 20, 1—6. [715, 1.]

33. What must we firmly and constantly observe if we would profitably consider *our* eternal election to salvation?

This: that as the preaching of *repentance* is universal, so is also the *promise* of the Gospel, that is, it *extends to all persons*, Luke 24, 47. Therefore Christ commanded, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name *among all*

nations." "For God so loved the *world*, that He gave His only-begotten Son" unto it, John 3, 16.; John 1, 29. 6, 51.; 1 John 5, 7. 2, 2.; Matth. 11, 28.; Rom. 11, 32.; 2 Pet. 3, 9.; Rom. 10, 12. 3, 22.; John 6, 40. Thus it is the command of Christ, Luke 24, 47.; Mark 16, 15., that in general unto all, unto whom *repentance* is preached, this *promise* of the Gospel should also be presented. [715, 2.]

34. Is the call of God by His Word always meant in *earnest*?

Yes: this *call* of God, which is given through the preaching of his Word, we should not regard as pretended and unreal, but we ought to know that through it God reveals his will; namely, that in those whom he thus calls, he will operate through the Word; so that they may be enlightened, converted, and saved. For the Word through which we are called, is a ministration of the Spirit, which imparts the Spirit, and through which the Spirit is conferred, 2 Cor. 3, 8.; and is the power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1, 16. *And since the Holy Spirit will be efficacious through the Word, strengthen us, and administer power and ability, it is the will of God, that we should receive and believe the Word, and be obedient to it.* [715, 3.]

35. Hence, how are those who belong to the elect, described in the Scriptures, in order that every one may know whether he belongs to them or not?

Hence the elect are thus described: "My sheep *hear my voice*, and I know them, and they *follow me*: and I give unto them eternal life," John 10, 27. 28. And Eph. 1, 11. 13.: "Those who, according to the purpose, are predestined to an inheritance" *hear the Gospel, believe in Christ, pray, and return thanks*, and are sanctified in love, have hope, patience, and consolation in trials, Rom. 8, 16. 25.; and although all these are very weak in them, yet they "*hunger and thirst after righteousness*," Matth. 5, 6. *Thus the Spirit of God bears witness unto the elect, that they are the children of God, and as they know not what they should pray for as they ought, he makes intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered*, Rom. 8, 16. 26. [716, 2. 3.]

36. But, must we not doubt whether we belong to the elect, when we remember that many, who were called and came to faith, have not persevered unto the end?

By no means: the Holy Scriptures, moreover, testify that God, who has called us, is so faithful, that when he has begun this good work in us, *he will also maintain it unto the end*, and accomplish it, if we do not turn ourselves away from him, but hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; whereunto also he has promised his grace, 1 Cor. 1, 9.; Phil. 1, 6. 7.; 1 Pet. 5, 10.; 2 Pet. 3, 9. 15, 18.; Heb. 3, 14. [716, 4.]

37. Hence what should we do, as God's will is so plainly revealed in His Word?

With *this revealed* will of God we should occupy ourselves, and follow it, and study it diligently, since the Holy Spirit, through the Word, through which he calls us, grants grace, power, and ability for this purpose; and we should *not pry into the abyss of the secret predestination of God*. In this sense Christ (Luke 13, 23. 24.), when one said unto him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?"—replied: "Strive to enter in at the straight gate." [716, 5.]

38. But when will a person first learn to understand how consolatory the doctrine of election is?

Thus says *Luther* in his preface to the Epistle to the Romans: "Proceed in the order observed in the Epistle to the Romans. Concern yourself in the first place with Christ and His Gospel, that you may perceive both your sins and His grace; then, strive with sin, as Paul teaches from the first to the eighth chapter. Afterwards, if (in the eighth chapter) you are tried by temptations and afflictions, you will be taught in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters how consolatory the doctrine of divine predestination is." Now this doctrine is salutary and consolatory to those who regard the revealed will of God, and pursue the order which St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans observes; for he first leads men to repentance, to a knowledge of sin, to faith in Christ, to obedience to God's commands, before he speaks concerning the mystery of the eternal election of God. [716, 5. 584, 7.]

39. But is it not written: "Many are called and few are chosen;" how then can the call be a sure sign by which God reveals the mystery of His will towards us?

The divine vocation, which takes place through the Word, is not the cause *that many are called, while few are chosen*, Matth. 20, 16.; as if such were the meaning of God: "Externally, through the Word, I call you all, indeed, to my kingdom, unto whom I give my Word, but *in my heart I do not intend it for all*, but for a few only; for it is my *will*, that the greater part of those, whom I call through the Word, should not be enlightened and converted, but be and remain damned, although I have declared myself otherwise towards them, through the Word by which they are called." [716, 6.]

40. Why would it be against God to accept that God indeed calls us externally to salvation, but means it differently in the heart?

Because, in this manner it would be taught that *God*, who is the eternal truth, *contradicts himself*; when at the same time God punishes such insincerity even in men, when a person declares a thing, and means and intends another in his heart, Ps. 5, 9. and 12, 3. [717, 1.]

41. What necessary foundation of our faith would thereby be overthrown, if we dare not believe that God by the call reveals the mystery of His will toward us?

In this way the necessary and consolatory foundation of our faith would also be rendered entirely uncertain and be destroyed, by which we are daily reminded and admonished *that from the Word of God alone, through which He confers with us, and calls us, we should learn and determine what His will towards us is*, and that whatever it assures and promises us, we should firmly believe, and not doubt in reference to it. [717, 1.]

42. Hence, what arrangement has Christ prepared, so that every individual Christian can apply the general promises of the Gospel to himself also in particular?

Christ causes the promise of the Gospel to be proposed not only in general, but He also *seals* it with the *Sacraments*, which He has attached as seals of the promise, and thus *He confirms it to each believer in particular*. [717, 2.]

43. Do we not for this very reason retain private absolution, in order that every individual may thereby become assured of the will of God towards him?

Yes: for this reason we retain *private absolution*, as the Augsburg Confession declares in the eleventh article, and we teach that it is the command of God that we should believe in this absolution, and feel assured that when we believe the words of the absolution, we are as truly reconciled unto God, as if we had heard a voice from heaven; as the Apology explains this article. *But we should be wholly and entirely deprived of this consolation, if, from that call which is made through the Word and Sacraments, we should not infer what the will of God towards us is.* [717, 3.]

44. Would not the doctrine of the power of the Word also be overthrown, if we could not know God's gracious will toward us by our call through the Word?

Certainly: the *foundation* of our religion would be subverted, namely, *that the Holy Spirit is truly present when the Word is preached, heard, and considered, and will be efficacious and operate through it.* [717, 4.]

45. Many being called and few chosen, can those also be the elect, who despise the Word by which they are called?

No: it must by no means be understood, as we have mentioned a little before, that those are the elect, who condemn, reject, blaspheme, and persecute the Word of God, Matth. 22, 5. 6.; Acts 13, 46.; who, hearing the Word, harden their hearts, Heb. 4, 2. 6. 7.; who resist the Holy Spirit, Acts 7, 51.; who persevere in sins without repentance, Luke 14, 18.; who do not truly believe in Christ, Mark 16, 16.; who have only an external appearance of piety, Matth. 7, 22. 23., and 22, 12.; or, seek, apart from Christ, other ways of righteousness and salvation, Rom. 9, 31. [717, 4.]

46. To what has God rather *ordained* those who are *elect* unto salvation at the same time in His eternal counsel?

To this, that the *Holy Spirit shall call, enlighten, and convert the elect through the Word, and that He will justify and save all those who receive Christ through true faith.* [718, 1.]

47. But what has God at the same time decreed in His counsel concerning those also, who do not follow the call?

This, that He will harden, reject, and condemn those who are called through the Word, if they cast off the Word, resist the Holy Spirit, who desires to be efficacious and to operate in them through the Word, and persevere in this course. [718, 1.]

48. Why, then, are many called, but few chosen?

Because few receive the Word and obey it. The greater part despise the Word, and will not come to the marriage-feast. [718, 2.]

49. Hence what is *not* the *cause* of this despising the Word?

The cause of this contempt of the Word is not the *fore-knowledge* of God, but the *perverted will of man*, which rejects or perverts the means and instrument of the Holy Spirit, which God offers unto it through the call, and it *resists* the Holy Spirit, who would be efficacious and operate through the Word; as Christ, Matth. 23, 27., says: “How often *would I* have gathered you together, and *ye would not.*” [718, 2.]

50. What is also not the *cause*, that many indeed accept the Word with joy, but afterwards again fall away? (Luke 8, 13.)

The cause is not, because *God would not grant* unto those, in whom He has begun this good work, *His grace* in order to perseverance; for this is contrary to the declaration of St. Paul, Phil. 1, 6.; but because they *contumaciously* turn away again from the holy command, grieve and offend the Holy Spirit, entangle themselves in the pollutions of the world, and garnish the habitation of their hearts for Satan again. The latter end with these is worse than the beginning, 2 Pet. 2, 10. 20.; Luke 11, 25. 26.; Heb. 10, 26.; Eph. 4, 30. [718, 3. See also 584, 8.]

51. Is, then, the doctrine of election useless, or even injurious, if we contemplate it as it is revealed in God's Word, and when we continue in and hold fast to it?

No: it is then very useful, salutary, and consolatory. [718, 4.]

52. What principal article of the Christian faith does this doctrine of predestination confirm, when it is contemplated and presented according to God's Word?

It confirms most forcibly the article, that *we are justified and saved by pure grace for the sake of Christ alone*, without any of our own works and merit. [718, 4.]

53. Why does the true doctrine of predestination so forcibly confirm the doctrine of *justification* (alone by grace for Christ's sake)?

Because, according to the doctrine of predestination, *before the world began, before we existed, indeed, before the foundation of the world, when certainly we could have done nothing good, we were elected to salvation by grace in Christ, according to the purpose of God*, Rom. 9, 11.; 2 Tim. 1, 9. [718, 4.]

54. Does the true doctrine of predestination confirm the doctrine also, that *the natural will of man is not free*?

Yes: by this doctrine, all false opinions and errors concerning the powers of our natural will, are overthrown; since, before the world began, God decreed and ordained in his counsel, that *He Himself*, by the power of His Holy Spirit, through the Word, would effect and work in us all that belongs to our conversion. [718, 4.]

55. Is, then, the *true* doctrine of election comforting in general only, or does it also give each individual Christian comfort for his own person in particular?

Yes: this doctrine also affords the eminent and precious consolation, that *God took so deep an interest in the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of each Christian, and so faithfully provided for these, that before the foundation of the world, in His counsel and purpose, He ORDAINED the manner in which He would BRING ME TO SALVATION, AND PRESERVE ME THERE.* [719, 1.]

56. Does the *true* doctrine of election give the Christians a beautiful and glorious comfort then also, when they consider that they can so easily lose their salvation through the weakness and wickedness of the flesh, or through the fraud and power of the devil and the world?

Yes: the *true* doctrine of election also gives the beautiful and glorious comfort, that God wishes to *secure MY salvation so truly and firmly, that in His eternal PURPOSE, WHICH CANNOT FAIL*

OR BE OVERTHROWN, HE DECREED IT, *and to secure it, placed it in the omnipotent hands of our Saviour Jesus Christ, out of which none shall pluck us.* John 10, 28. *For, if our salvation were committed unto us, it might easily be lost through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh, or be taken and plucked out of our hands, by the fraud and power of the devil and of the world.* Hence Paul, Rom. 8, 28. 35. 39. says: "*Since we are called according to the purpose of God, who shall separate us from the love of God. which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord?*" [719, 1.]

57. Does the true doctrine also give us a substantial comfort under the cross and in temptations?

Yes: in afflictions and temptations most precious consolation may be derived from this doctrine. For it teaches that, before the world was made, God determined and decreed in His counsel, that in all our necessities *He would be at our side, grant us patience, give us consolation, awaken hope in us, and produce such results as would tend to our salvation.* Hence, St. Paul, Rom. 8, 28. 29. 35. 38. 39., in consolatory terms, teaches that God *ordained in His purpose before the world was made, by what crosses and afflictions He would conform each one of His elect to the image of His Son, and that the crosses of each one MUST WORK TOGETHER FOR HIS GOOD, because he is called according to the purpose of God.* Hence, Paul draws the sure and certain conclusion, that "*neither tribulation nor distress, &c., neither death nor life, &c., can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.*" [719, 2.]

58. Does the true doctrine of election also give the comfort, that in spite of the persecutions of tyrants and in spite of the errors of heretics the Church can not be overthrown?

Yes: this article also affords us a noble testimony that the Church of God will remain, and resist all the powers of hell. [719, 3.]

59. Does the true doctrine of election give comfort against the offence, that the true Church is in such a pitiable plight and it is so well with the false church in this world?

Yes: it teaches likewise which is the true Church of God, so that we may not stumble at the great power of the false church, Rom. 9, 24. 25. (719, 3.)

60. Does the true doctrine of election contain not only comfort, but also *admonitions* and *warnings*?

Yes: from this article very serious *admonitions* and *warnings* are deduced; as, Luke 7, 30.: "They rejected the counsel of God against themselves." "I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper," Luke 14, 24. Again, Matth. 20, 16., and chap. 22, 14.: "Many are called, but few are chosen." Again, Luke 8, 8. 18.: "He that has ears to hear, let him hear," and, "Take heed how ye hear." [719, 4.]

61. According to this, how can the doctrine of this article be *used*?

In a useful, consolatory, and most profitable manner. [719, 4.]

62. What distinction must be observed in regard to the doctrine of election when teaching the same?

A very accurate distinction must be made between that which is expressly *revealed* in the Word of God in reference to this matter, and that which is *not revealed*. [719, 5.]

63. Did not God reveal everything concerning election?

No: for, besides those things which we have thus far said, and which *are revealed in Christ*, God has also *concealed and kept secret many things* concerning this mystery, and reserved them for His own wisdom and knowledge alone. [720, 1.]

64. Should we not also seek to find out with our reason the mysteries of election *not revealed* in God's Word?

No: into these things we ought *not to search*, nor indulge our imagination, nor *inquire curiously*, nor attempt to *determine*; but we should adhere to the revealed Word. [720, 1.]

65. Why is the admonition so very highly necessary, that we should not indulge in subtle inquiries and draw inferences in this matter?

Because, our curiosity always occupies itself with these things, rather than with those which God has revealed unto us in His Word with respect to this matter, *since we are unable to reconcile them in our minds*, which indeed we are not commanded to do. [720, 2.]

66. But is it not certain that God has already from eternity foreseen, and still knows, what will certainly take place?

Yes: there is no doubt that God foresaw precisely, and with the greatest certainty, before the world was made, and He knows still, who among those that are called, will believe or will not believe; also, who among the converted will remain steadfast, and who will not remain steadfast; who, if they fall back into sin, will return, and who will become hardened. Nor is there any doubt that the number of those who will be saved, and of those who will be lost, is known and seen of God. [720, 3.]

67. Are we allowed to draw all kinds of conclusions with our reason from this, that God has already foreseen and still knows everything?

No: since God has reserved this mystery unto His own wisdom, and has revealed nothing of it unto us in His Word, much less commanded us to search it out with our thoughts, but has earnestly restrained us from the attempt, Rom. 11, 33.: we should *not draw inferences in our minds, nor indulge in useless inquiries in reference to it*, but we should adhere to His revealed Word to which He has referred us. [720, 3.]

68. But does not God know the reason and time of the call and conversion of each person also, and has He not Himself determined, when He will call and convert him?

Yes: God knows without any doubt, and has appointed the season and time of each one's call and conversion; and when He will again raise him up after he has fallen.* [720, 4.]

69. Should ministers, therefore, in their preaching, and hearers in hearing the Word, wait for this hour determined of God?

Far be it! Since He has not revealed these things unto us, we understand that it is enjoined upon us to occupy ourselves continually with the Word of God, but to commit the season and time to God, Acts 1, 7. [720, 4.]

* This last clause concerning the raising up of the fallen, is taken from the revised Latin translation of Chemnitz.

70. Do we not also observe that God in distributing His grace manifests Himself quite differently toward entire countries and individual persons, although they are equally guilty?

Yes: we see that God gives His word to one region, but not to another; that He withdraws it from one people, but allows it to remain with another; or that one man is hardened, blinded, and given over to a reprobate mind, but that another, *though equally guilty*, is converted to God, &c. [720, 5.]

71. How shall we judge concerning this mystery that God treats man so differently, and how shall we apply it to our salvation?

It is our duty, in such cases, to remember that Paul, Rom. 11, 22. 23., has assigned certain limits to us, beyond which we are not allowed to inquire. For, he instructs us to consider the JUDGMENT OF GOD to be just, in the case of those who perish. For it is the well-merited *punishment of sin*, when, in the case of any country or people, God so inflicts punishment on account of the contempt of His Word, that it extends also to succeeding generations, as we perceive to be the case with the Jews; thus, in the case of some countries or individuals, God exhibits His *severity*, or the *penalties which we have deserved*, and of which we are *worthy*, since we, too, did *not walk in a manner worthy of God's Word*, but often deeply grieved the Holy Spirit; so that, being thus admonished, *we might live in the fear of God*, and *acknowledge and praise the GOODNESS OF GOD*, shown to us and in us, without or contrary to our merit, to whom He gives the Word, whom He allows to retain it, and whom He does not harden and reject. [721, 1.]

72. Why should we acknowledge the *just judgment of God* in those, from whom He takes away His Word, and who become hardened and blind?

Because: 1. For, since our nature is corrupted by sin, and worthy of and exposed to divine wrath and everlasting condemnation, *God is not under any obligation to bestow upon us His Word, His Spirit, or His grace*; and 2. even when He graciously grants us His gifts, *we often reject them*, and render ourselves unworthy of everlasting life. Acts 13, 46. [721, 2.]

73. Why does God permit us, who have His Word and grace, to behold this His just and well-merited judgment in certain countries, people, and persons?

In order that, by *comparing* ourselves with them, and by discovering our great *similarity* to them, *we* may see and praise with so much the greater diligence, *the pure, unmerited grace of God, manifested to the vessels of mercy.* (Rom. 9, 23.) For those who suffer punishment and receive the wages of their sins, are not dealt with unjustly. But in the case of those to whom God gives and preserves His Word, by which men are enlightened, converted, and saved, the Lord commends His boundless grace and unmerited mercy. [721, 3.]

74. Do we remain in the right path, when we without minutely inquiring and drawing inferences acknowledge the justice of God in those who experience His judgments, but acknowledge His pure unmerited grace in those to whom God gives His Word and enlightens and preserves?

Yes: when we proceed thus far in this article, we remain in the right path, as it is written: “O Israel, *thou hast DESTROYED THYSELF; but in ME is thine HELP.*” Hos. 13, 9. [721, 4.]

75. Is it right, if we desire in this article on election to search out and fathom and reconcile every thing with human reason?

No: whenever our thoughts would transcend these limits in this investigation, we should immediately repress them as *St. Paul* does, remembering the declaration: “*O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*” Rom. 9, 20. [721, 5.]

76. Does not the great Apostle Paul himself bear witness, that we can not and should not reconcile in our minds, search out and fathom all that is contained in this article?

Yes: the distinguished Apostle Paul, after having largely discussed this article, agreeably to the revealed Word of God, as soon as he is led to speak of those things which God has reserved unto His hidden wisdom concerning this mystery, desists, and at once closes with these words: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord?” Rom. 11, 33. 34.; that is, besides and above that which He has revealed unto us in His Word. [721, 6.]

77. Do we contemplate the eternal election of God properly, when we seek to search out the secret counsel of God?

No: this eternal election of God must be considered *in Christ*, and not apart from, or without Christ. [722, 2.]

78. How do you prove that the eternal election of God must be considered *in Christ*, and not outside of, or without Christ?

Thus: for *in Christ*, as the holy Apostle Paul testifies, we were *chosen* before the foundation of the world, Eph. 1, 4., as it is written: "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." [722, 2.]

79. Whereby is this election *revealed* to us from heaven?

Through the preached *Word*, when the *Father* says: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye *Him*." Matth. 17, 5.; Luke 3, 22. And *Christ*, Matth. 11, 28., says: "Come unto *me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And concerning the *Holy Spirit* Christ says: "He shall glorify *me*; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16, 14. [722, 2.]

80. To whom does the *entire Holy Trinity*, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, direct all persons in whom they shall seek the eternal election of the Father?

To Christ, as to the book of life. [722, 2.]

81. How do you prove, that the entire Holy Trinity directs all persons to Christ, in whom they shall seek the eternal election of the Father?

By three arguments: For 1., *this was decreed from eternity by the FATHER*, that those whom He would save, He would save *through Christ*; as Christ Himself says: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by *me*," John 14, 6. And again: "*I am the door*: by *me*, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, John 10, 9.

2. But *Christ*, as the only-begotten son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, John 1, 18., has *revealed the will of the Father* unto us, and consequently *our eternal election* to everlasting life too; namely when he says: "The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Mark 1, 15. Again He says: "This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlast-

ing life." John 6, 40. And moreover: "God so loved the world," &c. John 3, 16. These declarations the Father desires *all men* to hear, in order that they may come unto Christ. But Christ will not cast from Himself those who come, for it is written: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." John 6, 37.

3. Now, in order that we may come to Christ, the HOLY SPIRIT works true faith in us through the hearing of the Word, as the Apostle testifies, when He says: "So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," Rom. 10, 17.; when, namely, it is preached in purity and sincerity. [722, 2. 3. 4. 5.]

82. Should, therefore, a person who desires to be saved, trouble or harrass himself with thoughts concerning the *secret counsel of God*, whether he is also elected and ordained to eternal life; by which anxieties Satan is accustomed maliciously to disturb and torment pious minds?

By no means; but he should rather listen to *Christ*, who is the book of life and of the divine, eternal election of all the children of God to everlasting life; and who testifies to all men without distinction, that God desires *all men* to come unto Him, who are burdened with sins and heavy-laden, in order that they may have rest and be saved. [723, 1.]

83. What should all those who desire to be saved do, according to this doctrine of Christ, instead of tormenting themselves with God's *secret counsel*?

We should abstain from sin, *repent*, and *believe* His promise and rely wholly and entirely upon Him. But, since we are unable to do this by our own powers and of ourselves, the *Holy Spirit* desires to work in us *repentance and faith*, through the Word and Sacraments. And, in order that we may be enabled to proceed onward in this course, persevere therein, and *remain steadfast*, we should *call* upon God for His grace, which He has promised us in Holy Baptism, and *not doubt* that He will impart it unto us according to His promise. For thus Christ has promised, saying: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?—Or, if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye," &c. [723, 2.]

84. Dare believers, who can and shall accept the doctrine of election to their comfort, be inactive or even *resist the operation of the Spirit of God?*

No: inasmuch as the Holy Spirit dwells in the *elect*, who now believe in Christ, 1 Cor. 3, 16., as in his temple, and is not inactive in them, but impels the children of God to obey the commands of God, *believers* should likewise *not be inactive, much less resist the operation of the Spirit of God, but exercise themselves in all Christian virtues*, in all piety, modesty, temperance, patience, and brotherly love, and use all diligence to make their calling and election sure. 2 Pet. 1, 10. [723, 3.]

85. Why should believers, who can and shall accept the doctrine of election to their comfort, not be inactive, but exercise themselves in all Christian virtues?

That they may doubt the less, the more they feel the power and energy of the Spirit in themselves. For the Spirit of God bears witness to the *elect* that they are the children of God. Rom. 8, 16. [723, 3.]

86. Must not believers doubt in their election and salvation, when at times they do not perceive the power of the Spirit?

Far be it! If at any time they fall into such strong temptations, that they think they no more perceive the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, and say with David, Psalm 31, 22.: "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes;" yet, as David immediately adds, they should say again with him, *whatever they may discover in themselves*: "Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto thee." [723, 3.]

87. But must we not on this account doubt in our election and salvation, because it is possible for us to fall?

No: since our *election* is not **FOUNDED** upon our piety or virtue, but **ALONE** upon the merit of Christ and the gracious will of His Father, who cannot deny Himself, because He is immutable in His will and essence; therefore, if His children fall from obedience and stumble, He causes them to be called again unto repentance, through the Word; and the Holy Spirit will be efficacious in them unto conversion, through the Word; and when they re-

turn unto Him again in true repentance, through genuine faith, He will even manifest His *paternal love* towards all those who tremble at His Word, Jsa. 66, 2., and return unto Him with their hearts, for thus it is written, Jer. 3, 1. [723, 4.]

88. Should we, perhaps, on this account doubt in our election and salvation, because it is written: "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him?*"

Not at all; the declaration that "no man can come to Christ, except the Father draw him," John 6, 44., is righteously and truly made. *The Father, however, will draw no one without means; but He has instituted His Word and Sacraments as the ordinary means and instruments, for this purpose. And it is not the will of the Father or of the Son, that any person should neglect the preaching of His Word, or condemn it, and wait until the Father draws, without the Word and the Sacraments. For the Father draws indeed by the power of His Holy Spirit, yet according to His ordinary mode, through the hearing of His holy, divine Word, as with a net, by which the elect are snatched out of the jaws of Satan. And to the preaching of this Word, each miserable sinner should betake himself, hear it diligently, and not doubt the drawing of the Father. For the Holy Spirit with His power will accompany the Word, and operate through it: and this is the drawing of the Father.* [724, 2.]

89. However, may we from this, that not all come to faith who have heard the Word of God, draw the conclusion that God does not desire to give them salvation?

Not at all; the reason that all who hear the Word of God, do not believe, and, therefore, meet with a deeper condemnation, is not found in God's *unwillingness* to bestow salvation; but *they themselves are in fault, because they so hear the Word, not to learn, but only to scorn, to blaspheme, and to profane it, and because they resisted the Holy Spirit, who desires to operate in them through the Word; as was the case with the Pharisees and their adherents in the time of Christ.* [724, 3.]

90. Has God made "*the vessels of wrath*" and "*of dishonor*," as Paul writes about them?

No: the Apostle *distinguishes* with special diligence the *work of God*,—*who makes vessels of honor alone*,—from the *work of the devil and of man*, who by the impulse of the devil, and not of God, *has made himself a vessel of dishonor*. For thus it is written: "*God endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.*" Rom. 9, 22, 23. For here the Apostle clearly asserts, that God *endured* the vessels of wrath with much long-suffering, but he does not say, that God *made* them vessels of wrath. For, if this had been the *will* of God, there would have been no need for *long-suffering*. But it is the fault of the *devil and those individuals themselves*, and not of God, *that they are fitted to destruction*. [724, 3. 4.]

91. Whence then, does all preparation or fitting to destruction proceed?

Every preparation or fitting to destruction proceeds from the devil and men, through sin, and by no means from God, who does not desire that any man should be damned; how then should He Himself fit or prepare any person for damnation? [725, 2.]

92. How do you prove that God is not the cause of the damnation of any person?

As God is not a cause of *sin*, so he is also no cause of the *punishment*, that is, damnation; but the only cause of damnation is *sin*. "*For the wages of sin is death*," Rom. 6, 23. And, as God neither desires the commission of *sin*, nor has pleasure in it, so He likewise neither desires the *death* of the sinner nor has pleasure in his *damnation*. "*For He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*," 2 Pet. 3, 9. For thus it is written: "*For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth*," Ezek. 18, 23. 32. "*As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live*," ch. 33, 11. [725, 2.]

93. May we from this that God Himself prepares the vessels of *mercy*, conclude that He also Himself prepares the vessels of dishonor?

No: St. Paul testifies in definite terms, that *out of vessels of dishonor, vessels of honor may be made through the power and operation of God*; when he writes thus: “If a man, therefore, *purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work,*” 2 Tim 2, 21. For he that *purges himself, must PREVIOUSLY have been impure, and consequently HAVE BEEN a vessel of dishonor. But concerning the vessels of mercy he asserts clearly, that the Lord Himself has prepared them for glory,—which he does not say in reference to the damned, who themselves, and not God, have made themselves vessels of damnation.* [725, 2.]

94. May we from this that God *punishes sin by sin*, conclude that He never desired that those whom He thus punishes, should be saved?

Absolutely not; on the contrary, it must also be carefully observed, when God punishes *sin by sin*,—that is, in the case of those *who had been converted, on account of their subsequent security, impenitence, and wanton sins, punishes with hardness of heart and blindness of mind*—that this is not to be so understood, as if it had never been God’s gracious will that such persons should come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved. [725, 3.]

95. Why must we, then, believe both: as well that God desires to save all men, as also that God will harden the persevering sinners?

For this is the revealed will of God: *first*, that God will receive all those in grace, who repent, and believe in Christ. *Second*, that He will also punish those who willfully turn away from His holy commands, and entangle themselves again in the pollutions of the world, 2 Pet. 2, 20.; garnish their hearts unto satan, Luke 11, 25.; do despite unto the Holy Spirit, Heb. 10, 29., and that such, if they persevere in these things, shall be hardened, blinded, and eternally damned. [725, 3. 4. 5.]

96. Hence, what was *not* the reason, why Pharaoh was lost?

Pharaoh (concerning whom it is written: “Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power

in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth," Ex. 9, 16.; Rom. 9, 17.) did *not* perish *because* God would *not* grant him salvation, or because it was the *pleasure and will* of God that he should be *damned and lost*. "For God is not willing that *any* should perish; nor has He any pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live," 2 Pet. 3, 9.; Ezek. 33, 11. [726, 1.]

97. But whence is it, that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, so that Pharaoh persisted in the perpetration of sins, and became the more obdurate the more he was admonished?

All this was a *punishment of his former sins, and of the atrocious tyranny* which he had, in very many instances, practised most inhumanly in the case of the children of Israel, and contrary to the reproaches of his own conscience. [726, 2.]

98. But why did God finally abandon Pharaoh?

Inasmuch as God caused His Word to be preached and His will to be declared to him, and Pharaoh nevertheless willfully rebelled against all these admonitions and warnings, *God abandoned him, and thus his heart was hardened*, and God executed His judgment upon him; for he deserved nothing else than hell-fire. [726, 2.]

99. To what purpose only does the holy Apostle in Rom. 9. introduce this example of Pharaoh?

Only to show the *justice of God* administered in the case of the impenitent and the despisers of His Word. [726, 2.]

100. In what sense is it by no means meant, when the Apostle Rom. 9. quotes the example of Pharaoh?

It is *by no means* the meaning of Paul that God would not grant him, or any other man, salvation, nor that in *His secret counsel* He had ordained him to eternal damnation, so that he neither could nor might be saved. [726, 2.]

101. *Why can we certainly believe that the doctrine of election, as it has been here explained, is the true divine doctrine of this article?*

Because: by *this doctrine and explanation of the eternal and SAVING election of the elect children of Goa, THE HONOR OF GOD IS WHOLLY AND FULLY ATTRIBUTED UNTO HIM.* [726, 3.]

102. *Why is the honor of God wholly and fully attributed to Him by this doctrine?*

Because, it is taught thereby, that *through pure mercy in Christ, without any of our merits or good works, He saves us according to the purpose of His will.* [726, 3.]

103. *Do the Holy Scriptures teach that God alone by His mercy in Christ according to the purpose of His will, saves us?*

Yes: for it is written: “*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved,*” Eph. 1, 5. 6. [726, 3.]

104. *Is this, then, the true doctrine, if it be taught that in us also there is a cause of the election of God?*

Far be it! On the contrary: *the following doctrine is, therefore, false and erroneous, namely, that not the mercy of God ALONE, and the most holy merit of Christ are the cause, but that IN US ALSO there is a CAUSE of the election of God, on account of which God has elected us to everlasting life.* [726, 3. See also 586, 5. 6.]

105. *How do you prove that in us there is no cause of election?*

I prove this thus: For, *not only BEFORE WE HAD DONE ANY GOOD, but also BEFORE WE WERE BORN, yea, before the foundation of the world, He elected us in Christ; “That the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger: As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,”* Rom. 9, 11. 12. 13.; Mal. 1, 2. 3. [726, 3.]

106. When does this doctrine of election also give no one occasion either to *despond*, or to *lead a dissolute or wicked life*?

When people are taught that they must SEEK eternal election IN CHRIST and His holy GOSPEL, as in the book of life. For the Gospel excludes no penitent sinner, but calls and invites all poor, all troubled and afflicted sinners to repentance, to the acknowledgment of their sins, and to faith in Christ; it promises the Holy Spirit for their purification and renovation. [727, 2.]

107. What *consolation* does this doctrine afford to *troubled and agitated minds*?

The SUREST consolation, SINCE THEREBY THEY KNOW THAT THEIR SALVATION IS NOT ENTRUSTED TO THEIR HANDS, *else they would lose it more easily than Adam and Eve lost it in Paradise, and that, too, every hour and moment, but that it DEPENDS ON THE GRACIOUS ELECTION OF GOD, which He has revealed unto us in Christ, OUT OF WHOSE HAND NO ONE SHALL PLUCK US. John 10, 28.; 2 Tim. 2, 19. [727, 2.]*

108. Hence, who certainly and without any doubt teaches a *false doctrine on election*?

If any one inculcates this doctrine, concerning the gracious election of God, in such a manner *that distressed Christians cannot console themselves by it, but are rather led into despair, or that the impenitent are encouraged in their wickedness, it is undoubtedly certain and true, that this doctrine is set forth, not according to the Word and will of God, but according to mere human reason and the suggestions of the devil. [727, 3.]*

109. How do you prove, that the doctrine of election is certainly not understood and interpreted according to the Word of God, when it does not give the troubled and tormented Christians the surest comfort?

This I prove thus: as the Apostle testifies in Rom. 15, 4.: "For *whatsoever things* were written aftertime, were written for our learning, that we, *through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.*" But where this comfort and hope are

impaired, or taken away from us entirely by the Scripture, it is certain, that the Scripture is understood and explained contrary to the will and meaning of the Holy Spirit. [727, 4.]

110. Shall we Lutherans, therefore, remain true and faithful to the doctrine of our dear confession on election also until death?

Yes: to this simple, perspicuous, and profitable explanation, which has a good and sure foundation in the revealed will of God, we adhere. [727, 5.]

111. What questions and speculations should we Lutherans, however, when we treat of this doctrine, shun and avoid?

All refined, curious and useless speculations and questions. [727, 5.]

112. Finally, what should we Lutherans, as regards this doctrine, reject and condemn?

Whatever is contrary to these simple and profitable explanations. [727, 5.]

113. In regard to the doctrine of election, what are the errors which our Evangelical Lutheran Church has expressly REJECTED in her confession?

1. When it is taught, that God is not willing, that all persons should come to repentance, and believe the Gospel.

2. Again, that when God calls us, it is not *His* earnest desire that all men should come to Him.

3. Again, that God is not willing that all men should be saved, but without regard to their sins, solely through the bare counsel, purpose, and will of God, some are destined to damnation, so that they cannot be saved.

4. Again, that the mercy of God, and the most holy merit of Christ are not the ONLY cause of the election of God, but that IN US ALSO THERE IS A CAUSE, on account of which God has elected us to eternal life. [586, 2—5.]

114. What judgment does our church pronounce on all these errors in regard to the doctrine of election?

She declares: All these doctrines are false, odious, and blasphemous, by which all the consolation, which Christians have in the holy Gospel and in the use of the holy Sacraments, is taken away from them; and for this reason these doctrines should not be tolerated in the Church of God. [586, 6.]

115. But why is the doctrine of our Evangelical Lutheran Church certainly the true doctrine, revealed by God Himself in His Word, by which we can live and die cheerfully?

For the following two irrefutable grounds: by this brief explanation of the eternal election of God, *the honor is fully and entirely attributed to God*, that *He* saves us through mercy alone, according to the purpose of *His* will, without any merit of our own; and besides, *no cause is given to any one for faintheartedness, or for a dissolute life.* [585, 4.]

CONCLUSION.

May we be permitted this time, before we take leave of our dear reader, to add still a few hints in regard to the use of this little book.—

It is known that the doctrine has lately been loudly proclaimed, that God has *not chosen the elect out of this world* and decreed to make them His children; whereas Christ expressly says John 15, 19.: “I have chosen you *out of the world*, therefore the world hateth you.” Against this it is taught that God first took into consideration how man would *conduct* himself, who among mankind would forsake the world and become believing children of God and remain in this childhood to the end, and *first in consequence of this, that God foresaw this*, has He chosen such men unto His children, to sanctification and to salvation. Every one who wants to see, can immediately see that in the first place, there is no sense in it, if it be taught that God has chosen certain men as His children, to sanctification and salvation, in consequence of this that He foresaw that they would believe unto the end, hence, that they would already be and become holy and blessed children of God! Nevertheless those who now teach this affirm, that this their doctrine is not only right, but that this and no other has ever been the doctrine of our entire Lutheran Church; yea, they say that this doctrine is found in our Lutheran confessional writings, to wit, in the last general confession, namely, in the *Formula of Concord*! This, however, is based at its best construction upon a terrible self-delusion. *Of this, that God in consequence of the foreseen constant faith of certain men, and thus, in consequence of their foreseen proper conduct, has elected them to childhood and to salvation, not even the least word can anywhere be found in our Lutheran confessions.* But in the Eleventh Article of the *Formula of Concord* there stands written clearly and explicitly just the *very contrary*: that, namely, on the contrary,

election is a cause of our salvation and everything that belongs to the obtaining of the same, and, hence, is also a cause of faith and of conversion, which the Formula of Concord among other things proves from Acts 13, 48., where it reads: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." (See question 10, comp. questions 24. 46. and 55.) Against this the advocates of that false doctrine oppose the following: The Formula of Concord calls election a *cause of salvation*, and, hence, a *cause of faith* also, only because it takes the word "election" in an other sense than our later Lutheran theologians, *namely, in a wider, entirely general sense*, to which also the general decree of salvation belongs, which *pertains to all men*; yes (they say), this *general* decree of salvation is according to the Formula of Concord undoubtedly the *principal part* of the decree of election! Of course a man cannot speak or think right of election, unless he speaks and thinks of the general decree of salvation, according to which and how God desires to save *all men* or bring them to salvation, because God has decreed to save the *elect* in no other way than He would save *all men*; but on this account the *gracious decree* which *pertains to all men, so far as it pertains to all men*, is neither *election itself, nor a part of the same*. Every one, thus, here also sees that there is no sense in this also, to speak of an *election*, or what is the same thing here, of a *choosing out from*, if the same *pertains to ALL men*; for a *choosing out from among* which *pertains to all men* without exception, is nothing, a contradiction in itself. A *choosing out* already shows, that *not all* are taken, but from among all *only certain ones*, be they *few or many*. This even a little child can understand. And the Formula of Concord says very expressly that the eternal election of God or God's ordaining to salvation does *not* pertain at the same time to the good and the wicked, hence, *not* to all men, but *only* to the children of God, who are elected and ordained to eternal life before the foundation of the world. (See questions 5 and 6.) How, then, can it be said that the Formula of Concord teaches an election in the wider sense, which *pertains to all men, to the good and the wicked*?! We have, therefore, already admonished the reader in the Tract, "*The Controversy concerning Predestination,*"

above all to hold fast to the two chief *sentences* (questions 5—7, and 10—12.) This we repeat here also. If you, dear Lutheran reader, do not want to accept any un-Lutheran doctrine opposed to our confession concerning election, then remain unwaveringly steadfast on these two chief sentences of our confession; do not permit those important, decisive sentences to be twisted out of your fingers, or rather taken from your heart, by any artful or subtle interpretation; keep away from your person all the arts of jugglery by which others endeavor to prove to you that those sentences say something else than what they really do say. Read, therefore, attentively the questions 5—7, and 10—12 of this little book, together with their answers, and you will soon see that according to God's Word and our Lutheran confession election does not pertain to all men, but *only* to the elect children of God, who are elected and ordained to eternal life, before the foundation of the world was laid, and that *this* election of God which does *not* pertain to the pious and the wicked, is *a cause* which procures, works, aids, and promotes our salvation and whatever pertains to it, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. O do not permit yourself to be led astray! The Formula of Concord is not such a confused document, that it should first say that election *pertains alone to the elect children of God*, and then, a few lines afterwards, it should say of election, that nevertheless it pertains to *all men*.

Our adversaries, indeed, appeal to this, that the Formula of Concord itself says that if we would reflect and discourse correctly and with advantage upon *election*, we must, as Paul does Rom. 8, 29. ff., comprise the *entire doctrine* together, of the purpose, will, and ordination of God, belonging to our redemption, call, justification, and salvation (see quest. 20—23); hence (say our opponents) the entire decree of salvation made for all men belongs to election. But in the first place we still assert that there is no sense even in this that the *general* decree of salvation is a part of the decree of election; for Christ says clearly and distinctly: "*Many are called, but FEW are chosen.*" But the Formula of Concord also says expressly, that it speaks of "*OUR redemption, call, justification and salvation,*" whereby it clearly shows

that it speaks of all this in *reference to the elect*, because God does not lead them to salvation in any other way than by which He would lead *all* men to salvation. Therefore the Formula of Concord also declares according to question 24, that in what precedes, where it speaks of the call, justification, sanctification, and constancy under the cross, it has described the “*manner how God would bring, assist, promote, strengthen, and preserve the elect by His grace, gifts, and work thereto,*” namely to salvation. Hence, everything which the Formula of Concord says in questions 21—23, refers to the elect, wherefore it is said in the conclusion where it again repeats in a summary what it has already said: “*That He will finally eternally save and glorify THOSE, even in eternal life, WHOM HE ELECTED, called and justified.*” That this is the true sense of our dear confession, may be seen from this also that the Formula of Concord after question 20 says that *Paul* also treats and explains this article thus, Rom. 8, 29. f. But how does Paul treat and explain this article in Rom. 8, 29. f.? Thus, that he, indeed, speaks of the call, justification and glorification *but only in reference to the elect*; for thus he writes: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover WHOM HE DID PREDESTINATE, *them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.*” Rom. 8, 29. 30. For this reason Paul triumphs as follows: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s *elect*? It is God *that justifieth*. Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, &c. Who shall separate *us* from the love of Christ, &c. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, &c. shall be able to separate *us* from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8, 33. ff.) Of the *general decree of salvation* so far as it pertains to *all* men, Paul had treated in the preceding chapters of the Epistle to the Romans; but from the second half of the 8th chapter on he speaks of this decree in relation to the *elect*. Hence, to prove from that what the Formula of Concord says after questions 20—23, that the Formula of Concord speaks of an election in the wide sense, which refers to all men, is evidently based upon a terrible mis-

understanding or upon a malicious perversion and misrepresentation. To this may be added that the first part of the Formula of Concord which gives a *short synopsis* of the doctrine of election, and, hence, is intended to contain the *principal parts* of it, does not contain those eight points (see questions 21 and 23), in which points according to our opponents the *chief things* of election, namely, the *general decree* of salvation, are contained. If our opponents were right, then the first part of the Formula of Concord had omitted just the *principal part*! But there can be no thought of such a thing. The Formula of Concord has not omitted what for it is the principal part, but our opponents desire to smuggle into it, what to *them* is the principal thing of election. But the general decree of salvation is undoubtedly the principal part of the entire Christian doctrine, not, however, the chief thing, yea, not a part of election.

But, it is said, does not the Formula of Concord after question 33 expressly say *this also, that the promise of the Gospel is universal*, and, consequently, *pertains to all men*?—We answer: Yes, of course!—But where does the Formula of Concord say, that this is *election*?—Nowhere!—In this passage it rather treats of this: concerning what “above all we must hold fastly and firmly, if we would *advantageously consider our eternal election to salvation*,” if we, namely, desire to know whether we also belong to those “who can and shall accept this doctrine” (of election) “to their comfort.” (See question 27.) Hence, there is nothing more said in this passage concerning the *nature* of election, or what it is, properly speaking, but concerning what we must hold fast if “we would *discourse with advantage upon our eternal election to salvation*.” For this we can evidently do then only when we, in the first place, hold fast to this that God has from eternity loved *all men*, and *hence, us also*; that God has redeemed *all men*, and *hence, us also*; that God earnestly calls *all men* to Himself, and *hence, us also*; that God would bring *all men*, and *hence, us also*, to repentance and faith, and preserve them therein to their end, and save them eternally. For God has promised no one, that He would reveal His election unto him *without means*. How, otherwise, can we dare to believe, that even *we* belong to the

elect, if we cannot first and above all hold to the general decree of God, which most certainly pertains to *all* men, and, hence, most certainly to *us also*?—The same must also be said of another part of the Formula of Concord which in our days is miserably perverted by many; where it is said that “God directs *all men* to Christ as the book of life, in which they are to *seek* the eternal election of the Father.” (See Questions 80 and 81.) Even from this many desire at this time to conclude and prove that the Formula of Concord teaches *an election of all men*! Something more foolish can scarcely be imagined than just this conclusion and proof. *Does our confession contradict Christ to His very face, who repeatedly says: “Many are called, but FEW are chosen”?* (Matth. 20, 16.; 22, 14.; comp. 1 Cor. 1, 26—28.) Our Formula of Concord desires rather, as the context shows, with those words to say simply this: Whoever desires to become certain whether he belongs to the few elect, shall not endeavor to speculate and search out the *secret* counsel of God, or pray and wait so long until God reveals it unto him immediately, by an angel, or by an inspiration from the Holy Spirit; but he must seek his election *in Christ*, who is also his Saviour; if he really *seeks* it there, he shall also *find* it, no man excepted. For, as God according to His revealed Word has from eternity decreed that “whom He will save, He will *save through Christ*,” and that whom He has elected *He will also call by the Gospel of Christ and justify by faith and make him His child*, therefore, every man can and shall by this, because he is *called* and stands in the *faith* that justifies, and in no other way, become certain that he belongs to the elect. From this you can also see, dear reader, that these act against better knowledge and their own conscience, and deal in falsehoods, who say that by the doctrine that election is not universal, the doctrine of the general grace of God in Christ is darkened, yea, denied! Much rather can the doctrine of election be considered to our comfort and benefit then only, when previously, at the time, and afterwards, the doctrine of general grace also be treated most zealously and copiously; which we also by the grace of God do in all faithfulness. From this it does not follow, however, that the doctrine of general grace be-

longs to the doctrine of election as a substantial part, yea, as the *principal* part of the same! There exists rather the same relation here as with the doctrine of justification and redemption. The doctrine of the *justification* of a poor sinner before God can most assuredly not possibly be presented for the benefit and comfort of the penitent sinner, if the *redemption* of all men be not first established as the basis; but is, therefore, the redemption of all men a *part*, yes, the *principal part* of the doctrine of the justification of a poor sinner before God? By no means! It is not a *part* of it, but the *ground* on which it rests. And this is also the relation of the doctrine of the general decree of salvation and of election. Even the general decree is not a *part* of *election*, but the *ground* upon which election rests. A minister who would commence his teaching with the doctrine of election (as the Calvinists really do immediately in the beginning of their Heidelberg Catechism), would be a horrible perverter of the counsel of God unto human salvation. The doctrine of *universal grace* is rather the *chief doctrine* of all Christianity, with which *alone* we must begin, and also afterwards continue and never cease, if man is to be brought to salvation; but the doctrine of *election* does not belong to the first letters of God's Word, and is not milk as the doctrine of universal grace, but strong meat, which belongs to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5, 12—14.); it has this object only to give those who have already become believers a particular *comfort*, namely, the glorious comfort: that their salvation does not rest in their hands, out of which it could too easily be lost on account of the world, the flesh and the devil, but in the hand of Christ; that God Himself, as He has begun the good work in them, will also accomplish it unto the day of Jesus Christ; that their salvation is so firmly grounded upon God's eternal election, that even the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and that, therefore, nothing, nothing can pluck them out of the hands of Christ.—

In order that nothing, dear reader, may influence you ever to apostatize from the pure scriptural doctrine of our church on predestination, and to accept the new doctrine which some now

desire to smuggle into our Formula of Concord, we will yet direct your attention to three points.

The first of these three points is this:

Our dear Formula of Concord *rejects* most decidedly the error of the *Synergists*, that *not only the mercy of God and the most holy merits of Christ*, but that ALSO IN US there is a cause of the eternal election of God, on account of which God elected us unto eternal life. (S. Question 113, compare also Questions 87 and 101—105.) According to this, the doctrine that *foreseen faith* is also a cause of election, is without any doubt an un-Lutheran, Synergistic doctrine, because faith is something which is *not in God*, but IN US.—Perhaps you will say here: How? Is, then, according to the Formula of Concord, faith not necessary in order to be elected? Are not rather, according to the express declaration of the Formula of Concord, just the *believers* alone, the pious children of God the elect? (S. Q. 5. 45.) Yes of course, faith is absolutely necessary, if a man would be justified and saved before God; for the Holy Scriptures say in plain words: “*Without faith it is impossible to please God*” (Heb. 11, 6.); “*He that believeth not, shall be damned*” (Mark 16, 16.); “*He that believeth not, is condemned already*” (John 3, 18.); “*He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (John 3, 36.). But from this it does not follow that God then first chose the elect when He foresaw that they would believe to the end; but from this only follows that God undoubtedly could have chosen no one to be His child and to salvation, if He had not at the same time decreed Himself to bring him to faith by His grace, and to preserve him in faith to his end. And that God from eternity already *ordained* the elect hereto, is the plain doctrine of the Formula of Concord. (S. Q. 10. 24. 46. 55.) This is not, as many now say quite injudiciously, the *Calvinistic doctrine*, but the *pure Lutheran doctrine*. For the scandalous *Calvinists* teach that God has elected certain men *absolutely*, that is, entirely *unconditionally*, by *His mere good pleasure*, not influenced by the merits of Christ; but our dear Lutheran Church teaches that God has elected *on account of Christ's merits and through faith in Christ*, which He at the same time

decreed to give. Whoever is elected, is, according to God's Word and our Confession, not elected *in consequence* of this that God foresaw that he would conduct himself properly, allow himself to be brought into the order of grace, namely, that he would allow faith to be wrought in him, or even that he would determine himself to believe, as the Iowaians teach, and by his co-operation work faith in himself; but because God out of pure mercy has on Christ's account "*ordained*" to bring him to faith, to preserve him in faith to the end, and in this and no other manner, and in this and no other way, to give him eternal life. (S. Q. 10. 24. 46. 55.) The elect have, therefore, done nothing themselves whatever to their election, and can not attribute to themselves anything, not even the least thing, pertaining to the work of their salvation. Dear reader, observe this well! For only then when you make the mercy of God and the merits of Christ *alone* the cause of your election unto childhood in God and salvation, will you give God alone, and entirely, and fully the glory of your salvation. (Comp. Q. 95 and 115.) But woe be unto you, if you take **this** glory from God and Christ, and attribute it to yourself, even in part! This is the most terrible idolatry which you can practise with yourself, and is the sure road unto condemnation. (S. Q. 113 and 114.) For Christ will not allow Himself to be robbed of this glory; hence He says: "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. *I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins." (Is. 43. 24. 25.) Woe be to him, who lessens this glory of Christ! He rejects Him altogether, and, with Him, his own salvation.—True, our opponents say that they also admit that faith is alone the work of God's grace in the believers; and that when they teach that election has taken place in consequence of foreseen persevering faith, they by no means herewith deny that election is to be ascribed to the grace of God alone, and not to the cooperation of man and the merits of man. But, because they at the same time firmly hold that *it is false* to say that the elect are not chosen in regard to their "*conduct*," and that we must *rather* teach that the elect are chosen in view, in con-

sequence of, in regard to, under the condition of faith, we see from this that our opponents are not in earnest when they admit that faith is entirely the work of God's grace in the believers; else they would not reject and condemn the doctrine that faith is not the cause of *election*, but, on the contrary, election is the cause of *faith*. If they were heartily convinced of this that faith is alone the free gift of God's grace, they would then also believe that God has *from eternity already decreed to give this faith to the elect*, who all believe to the end. That they make faith the *condition* of election, which must be fulfilled on the part of *man*, by this they, alas, clearly give to understand that they regard faith as something (many, perhaps, without being aware of it) that man himself on his part is required to fulfill, and really does fulfill, not as something that God gives to man and has from eternity decreed to give. *Martin Chemnitz*, the chief author of the Formula of Concord, writes very beautifully as follows: "It has not the sense" (in the Article of Election) "that God has prepared salvation in general, that, however, the persons who desire to be saved, must and can for themselves and by their own strength and power strive to obtain it; but God has considered each and every person of the elect, who *shall* be saved through Christ, in His eternal counsel, according to His gracious purpose, and predestinated and elected them to salvation, and *ordained, how HE would bring them thereto, promote and preserve them by His grace, gifts and operation.*" And immediately afterwards *Chemnitz* proceeds thus: "*Thus the election of God does not FOLLOW AFTER our FAITH and justification, but PRECEDES as a CAUSE of all this; for those whom HE has ordained and elected, He also called and justified, Rom. 8.*" (See *Chemnitz* "Little Handbook" of the year 1574.) According to this, all those who *reject* the doctrine that *faith follows election* and that *election precedes faith as its cause*, should at least honestly confess this much that they by no means (as they have hitherto pretended) have contended against *Missouri* only, but also against *Chemnitz* and against the *Formula of Concord* written by him. Let them befooled ever so many for the present, so that they think that their doctrine is the doctrine of *Chemnitz* and the *Formula of Concord*, it will

sooner or later become evident to every one, that with their pretensions they have spoken falsehoods. Further, those among our opponents who really are not Synergists and Semipelagians, who attribute to men a cooperation in the work of their salvation, and who, without observing it themselves, have fallen into a Synergistic and Semipelagian doctrine—these should become mindful of their position even hereby, that all Synergists, all Semipelagians, yea, all Rationalists, are now opposed to us, and have joined their side and welcome them with acclamation. They should for God's sake not think that because they have so great a crowd and we so few, that, therefore, *they* represent the *truth* and *we* on the contrary must be in *error*. *We now live in the age of Synergism*. Not only almost all would-be orthodox sects, but also almost all would-be orthodox *Lutherans* are buried (pardon this expression!) head and ears in Synergism. Wherefore we do not doubt a moment that God has for this reason permitted that a restless spirit has begun the present controversy on predestination, because God, as it most obviously appears, intends to purge His orthodox church from the very dangerous and destructive leaven of *Synergism*. Woe unto him who remains on the side of those who in this controversy contend against God! Many honest men may do so, perhaps, because they think that our opponents stand entirely on the side of many old faithful theologians; therefore they hold with our opponents only out of respect and in reliance on these theologians; but it will soon become manifest that our opponents do not only not agree with the Formula of Concord, but also not even with those theologians, but have brought forth a doctrine which just the Cryptocalvinists, as they revile us, have had, and against whom the Formula of Concord had been composed in the year 1577.—

The *second* of the three points, to which we feel prompted especially to direct the attention of the reader, is this:

Our dear Formula of Concord teaches according to God's Word: Inasmuch as our salvation may easily be lost out of our hands *by weakness and the wickedness of our flesh*, or by the cunning and power of the devil and the world can be plucked and taken from us, God has, in order to secure *our salvation well and*

surely, ORDAINED the same in His eternal purpose which can not fail or be overthrown, and has deposed it into the almighty hand of our Saviour Jesus Christ, out of which no one can pluck us; hence Paul also exclaims triumphantly with all the elect Rom. 8, 28. 39.: "*Because we are called according to His purpose, who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ?*" (See Q. 56 and 107.) But our opponents teach: that on the part of God salvation is indeed certain to the believing Christians, for on His part God does everything that He can, so that faithful Christians may continue steadfast and be saved; but that because believing Christians *still have this weak, evil flesh*, they must be uncertain of their salvation, and it is only a terrible delusion, if they think they can be certain of it. Our opponents of course can not judge otherwise. as they make certainty depend upon that what man does. For they say: that man does not remain steadfast in faith, because God has ordained and elected him to be His child and to salvation, already from eternity; but that only on the condition that man remains steadfast and keeps on the way of salvation, to the end, and in consequence of this that God has foreseen that man would remain thus faithful until death, He has elected him to salvation. But now, it is said, this no believing Christian can deny, that he may perhaps apostatize and lose the faith, namely, *on account of the weakness and wickedness of his flesh and the cunning and power of satan and the world*; and hence no believing Christian can be certain of his salvation before he is already in his last struggles. The *Formula of Concord* on the contrary teaches that *just on account of the weakness and wickedness of the flesh and on account of the cunning and power of the devil and the world*, God has by His election taken the salvation of believers in His hand, so that believers may know that nothing, neither in this world, nor in hell, neither the flesh, nor the world, nor satan can rob them of this salvation; but our opponents teach just the opposite of this. According to their theory the *weakness and wickedness of the flesh* makes believing Christians uncertain of their election and, hence, of their salvation also, whereas, according to our confession, election serves exactly for this purpose that believing Christians, *in spite of the*

flesh, the world, and the devil, can and shall be certain of their salvation; of their salvation, we say, "because," as our confession expressly testifies, "the elect *only are saved.*" (See Q. 28.) With their new doctrine of election, our opponents even go so far, and must go so far, as to assert, that *in temptation election certainly gives no comfort*, but only then, when a man has a firm, certain, strong and joyful faith, and has a good hope, that by God's help he shall already in faith conquer all things. But our Formula of Concord teaches just the opposite, namely, that *just in temptation*, when man sees nothing good in himself, feels no faith in him, and when every other comfort departs from him, then election gives him "*the most substantial comfort*;" yea, that man in temptation, just when doubt in his steadfastness and salvation arises within him, *he first learns, how comforting election is*; for it teaches him that his salvation is not in his hands, but in the gracious election of God. (See Q. 107. 38.) This argument already shows incontrovertably, that our opponents teach quite an other election, than our Church in her confession, from which they have shamefully apostatized on this point.—

The *third* of the three points, to which we feel prompted especially to direct the attention of the reader, is, finally, the following:

Our dear Formula of Concord teaches with *Luther*, that a man who desires to be saved, must *first* concern himself with Christ and His Gospel, that he may know his sins and the grace of Christ; then strive against sin; afterwards when in temptation the cross and suffering press sorely upon him, election or predestination will teach him, how beneficial and comforting it is. (See Q. 38.) However, our opponents teach that election is nothing else and nothing more, than the decree of God to save believers in view and in consequence of their foreseen faith persevering to the end. This is quite evidently a doctrine of election entirely different from that of the Formula of Concord. For that *that* "election" which our *opponents* teach, is "useful and comforting," a man does not first learn when he comes "into temptation under the cross and suffering." What our opponents call "election," is nothing more than a chief part of the uni-

versal divine decree of salvation, namely, that God has already from eternity decreed, to save all those who live and die in faith. But this is not the first thing to preach and to consider when Christians are found in temptation under the cross and suffering! This belongs rather, as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to the “first letters of the divine Word,” to the “milk” for young children, to the “doctrine of the beginning of the Christian life” (Heb. 5, 12. 13. 6, 1.), by which man must first be brought to faith and a Christian life.—Behold, dear reader, if you take the doctrine of our opponents up and examine it, you will find that it absolutely does *not agree* in anything with what the Formula of Concord says on election. This is, however, an incontrovertible sign that the doctrine of our opponents is a total different one, else it would naturally, even if presented in different *words*, agree in *sense* with everything the Formula of Concord says on election. If you will observe well, dear reader, you will finally find out, that our opponents generally teach *no election at all*, but only *call* that election, which, as already said, is nothing else, but the universal *decree*, or only the last part of it.—

And, dear reader, you must not allow yourself to be deceived because our opponents are so bold, and the more proofs we produce from the Scriptures and the confessions, the more impudent they become, and without examining our arguments, not to say anything about refuting them, they simply rush headlong, crying out: “You are Calvinists! Yes, Calvinists, that is what you are!” But this has always been the way of all false teachers. When they could find no more *arguments* to produce, they only became the more insolent to repeat their old *assertions*, *dicta*, *accusations*, and as often as they were driven to the wall they became the more furiously irritated, and burst forth in passion and fanaticism. This they did of course in the hope that they might partly encourage their comrades, and partly gain to their side the thoughtless crowd.—

But we must hasten to the end, so that this little book does not become too diffuse.

In conclusion, allow us to add the few following words.

Dear reader, are you already in faith, or not?—If you have *not* the faith, then I must advise you once more, as I have already done in the preface; do not at present meddle with the mysterious doctrine of election at all! In this your condition of unbelief, you require to be taught the first letters of the divine Word. The doctrine of *repentance* and *conversion* is what you need.—But if you by God's grace are already in the true faith, then let me further ask you the question: Did you give yourself this faith?—You will answer: No, indeed: I could not have done the least towards this that I have through the Word of the Gospel obtained a living faith; and I did not come to the Word, but the Word came to me.—Very well! But do you think, perhaps, that you have thus only *accidentally* come to faith?—You will undoubtedly answer here: No, indeed: if I thought this, I would certainly be a mere heathen; for nothing takes place by chance.—All right, now let me ask you again: *Whom are you consequently to thank* for it, that you have come to faith by the Word of God?—You will say: For this I must thank the mercy of God and the most holy merits of Jesus Christ alone, altogether. It was God who opened my stubborn heart, as once He did the heart of Lydia, that I might keep what I read and heard from the Word of God. Really I have in no way deserved this! I have much more deserved on account of my manifold sins, that God should not have called me, nor brought me to faith, but much rather, that He should have let me die in my sins and be lost. My conversion is a mystery to myself; only *so much* do I know, that *I* have done nothing towards it.—Now do you think, *that God first thought of this in time*, to bring you to faith? Did He first think of it when your eyes opened on this world, when you learned your sinful condition and the grace of God in Christ, when you came to faith and became a different man?—You will answer: How could I think this! For I know from the Word of God, that God did not only *foreknow* already from eternity all the good which He does in time, but has also *decreed* it already from eternity.—Then let me only ask you another question: Do you also hope to be saved?—You answer: Yes, I hope so. If I did not have this hope, I would have to reject Luther's

“Christian Questions”; I could not even repeat with the entire holy Christian Church in the true faith the third Article of the Apostle’s Creed, where it reads: “*I believe . . . in the life everlasting,*” and could not say with our catechism: “I believe . . . that God will give unto ME and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.” And my dear Lord Jesus Christ says: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, *neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*” (John 10, 27. 28.) How could I then doubt in my salvation? —Just so, dear reader! —*Behold, here you have in a very few words, as in a summary, the entire doctrine of election.* For this, and nothing else, is what the Formula of Concord teaches on election and which we teach in full accord with it, and only that which does not agree with this simple doctrine, that confession of ours, and we also in accordance with it, reject. If you cannot become clear in the many disputations which are now produced verbally and in writing on election, only be of good cheer! If you stand by that simple faith, you have the true doctrine on election, even if you should never during your life have heard anything of that word “election.” Do not permit anything to lead you to err from this faith! Let those contend about election and its mysteries, who cannot let it alone or must do so on account of their call in defending the truth. But as to you, hold fast to the short text, in which God, the Lord, Himself says: “O Israel, *thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.*” (Hosea 13, 9.) From this golden text do not depart either to the right or to the left; you will then walk upon the right path, and at the end of this your path of faith you will find eternal salvation.

To this may God the Father help us all, for Jesus Christ’s sake, His only begotten Son and the merciful Saviour of all sinners, through the operation and guidance of the Holy Spirit. To whom, as the eternal Triune God, be thanks, praise, honor, and glory from the lips of all the angels and the elect children of God here in time and in heaven from eternity to eternity. Amen.

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